

PHILIP A. LEIGHTON

LITTLE CREEK RANCH
2389 ALAMO PINTADO ROAD
SOLVANG, CALIFORNIA 93463

December 12, 1979

For Koch
Jean &
Task Force

To the Mineral King Planning Team:

Greetings!

I am a retired Stanford Chemistry Professor, now 82 years old, who for the past half century has been renewing his physical and mental vigor, as well as gaining spiritual enrichment, by annual summer trips to Mineral King.

The four alternatives for Mineral King development which you are considering have come to my attention, and of these I strongly recommend alternative B, to maintain the current pattern of public use by upgrading and redesigning existing developments in their present locations.

There are several reasons for preferring this alternative, and they are:

1. It seems to me that Alternate D, to develop Mineral King as a major year around attraction, is no better than the Disney plan, which those who love the place have been so strongly fighting ever since its inception, and I would expect they would continue to fight Alternate D just as strongly.
2. I like the idea of reopening Sunny Point as a walk-in campground for backpackers, as that is precisely what I did, and where I camped, during my packing days so many years ago, hence I know full well what a spiritual uplift it gives a packer to start his hike from that beautiful spot.

2.

3. I also like the idea of loop trails in the valley proper, for now that I am too old to climb the high passes (ah, to see the top of Black Rock Pass again!) I must limit my walking largely to the valley and nearby slopes. I tried several such walks this past summer, and a loop trail or trails would have been of great assistance, I assure you.

4. Although I have never been a cabin owner, I favor the idea of allowing the cabins to remain, and I have two reasons for this.

First, it has always seemed to me that a number of the cabins fit so naturally into their settings as to add materially to the beauty and attractiveness of the place. It just seems they should be there as part of the picture. The same goes for the old store; it almost broke my heart when I found it was gone. Any chance it could be restored under alternate B?

Second, as I do not have to tell you, the cabin owners have always been and in my opinion will continue to be a powerful force in encouraging the things that are good, and opposing the things that are bad, for the valley, and this force is too valuable an asset to lose.

5. It is for these reasons that I do not favor alternatives C and D, and I likewise do not favor alternative A, for it seems to me there has been a distinct deterioration in the quality of the valley since Disney came into the picture, a deterioration which alternative B, under the thoughtful direction of the National Park Service, would go far toward undoing.

May I tell you a personal story which illustrates this point? At the lower end of Faculty Flat, back of the Bissini cabin, there is a small hill, and on top of this hill, right at the edge of the dropoff into the deep canyon below, there is a small spot of glacial polish on the granite, with striations which as far as I know are the only remaining proof that the glacier once went over this dropoff, and it seems to me this is an important natural feature, which

should be preserved, both as a point of interest and for its scientific value.

Well, some years ago, while having dinner at the old store, I read a Disney poster which said, among other things, that they would preserve all the natural features of the valley. A day or two later I climbed the little hill to look once again at this spot of glacial polish, trace out its striations, and contemplate what they proved about the past history of the valley. To my utter dismay, I found that a Disney crew had defaced the polish and obscured the striations by painting thereon a large black cross and circle, to be used, I suppose, as a marker in their surveys. So much for Disney's promise to preserve all the natural features of the valley!

This past summer I once again visited the spot and found, thanks God, that the paint is weathering away, so that, given time and protection, this invaluable bit of scientific proof of part of the valley's history may recover from that thoughtless act. But its protection and preservation will require some help from the National Park Service, and this is another reason for favoring alternative B.

I know that you are facing a tough and complex decision, with many ramifications and pressures to contend with, and I am confident your wish is above all to choose wisely. For what it is worth, after half a century of experience with the valley, in my judgment the choice dictated by wisdom is Alternate B.

Sincerely,

Philip A. Leighton